# Sexual Assault Training Oversight and Prevention Act

Sexual assault in our military continues to undermine readiness, unit cohesion, and morale. According to the DOD's own reports, this problem is getting worse, not better. The Sexual Assault Training Oversight and Prevention Act or STOP Act, aims to fundamentally change how sexual assault is handled in the military.

This legislation takes the prosecution, reporting, oversight, investigation and victim care of sexual assaults out of the hands of the normal chain of command and places jurisdiction in the hands of an autonomous Sexual Assault Oversight and Response Office. This Office will be comprised of civilian and military experts. The legislation also creates a sexual assault database within DoD that will be required to share information with DoJ civilian sexual offender database.

Sexual violence (which includes rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment) in the U.S. military is a crisis with no end in sight. Despite over 25 years of Pentagon studies, task force recommendations and congressional hearings, cases of rape, sexual assault, and sexual harassment continue to occur at alarming rates year after year. In 2010, the DoD conducted a survey of active duty members which revealed that only 13.5 percent of victims report sexual assault, which means that over 19,000 incidents of sexual assault actually occurred in 2010 alone.

The prosecution rates of sexual assault are alarmingly low. Only 8 percent of sexual assailants were referred to courts martial, or military court, compared with 40 percent of similar offenders prosecuted in the civilian court system.

The most recent SAPRO report indicates that commanders are holding fewer accountable:

- Instances a commander took action on the grounds of a sexual assault charge decreased by 23%. In 2010, 1,025 commander actions were taken on the grounds of a sexual assault, in 2011 there were 791.
- The number of initiated court-martials fell 8%, from 529 in 2010 to 489 in 2011.
- The number of perpetrators convicted of committing a sexual assault decreased 22%, from 245 in 2010 to 191 in 2011.

Several of our closest allies have instituted meaningful and, in some instances, sweeping reform. In particular, Australia, Canada, and the United Kingdom have each taken significant steps to fundamentally reform the way complaints are resolved. For example, the United Kingdom transformed its internal military judicial proceedings by largely eliminating the inappropriate influence of military personnel and transferring authority to an independent, impartial office. This legislation will take similar steps in addressing sexual-related offenses.